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Hickory Hill Park

Iowa City, Johnson County

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Many people believe that seeing many species of birds in the state of Iowa requires traveling all over the state. This is not so as 189 species have been seen in Hickory Hill Park (HHP) in Iowa City, Johnson County. There are three main attractions of HHP, the migrating warblers — especially the almost regular sighting of the Connecticut Warbler, the breeding Bell's and White-eyed Vireos, and the hawk flights. The abundant wildflowers add to the beauty of HHP.

The species total is remarkable for such a small area. There are perhaps three reasons for the size of the list. HHP contains a variety of different habitats — everything but a large water area. It is birded as heavily as any place in Eastern Iowa. The birds may also stop here because it is part of a habitual flyway or because the park's large woodland area stands out as a likely resting place for migrants when flying along the Iowa River. Whatever the causes it is a wonderful place to bird.

Hickory Hill Park has three entrances with parking lots at two. The Rose Hill entrance is at the east end of Bloomington St. The North entrance can be found by turning south from Rt. 1 (Dodge St.) onto Conklin St. This is just north and west of St. Joseph Cemetery. There are picnic tables, a shelter, and a parking lot at both the Rose Hill and North entrances. There is another entrance located about 25 yards north of Rochester Ave. on Seventh Ave., which is easily accessible by public bus.

From Interstate 80, the best way to reach HHP is to take Exit 246. This is Dodge Street and Route 1. Drive south towards Iowa City for a little over one mile. Turn left (south) on Conklin Street. Conklin Street can be found immediately before St. Joseph Cemetery. To confuse the out of town visitor, Conklin Street is called Dubuque Street on the north side of Dodge Street.

Although HHP can be reached by car it is not a place that one can successfully bird without getting out and walking. There are many paths in the park and although they are sometimes a bit muddy, they are passable in all weather. Only a few of the paths are steep — most are level or only a moderate grade. While HHP is not accessible to the handicapped, the paths are well maintained and almost all can be walked by anyone.

The best time to bird HHP is in early to mid-May as one can see many warblers and thrushes and late sparrows may still be around. Wildflowers are at their first peak in early to mid-May. The dates for the Connecticut Warbler sightings are a bit later — May 17-23. Fall is also a good time to be in HHP as the tree colors and fall warblers make for a lovely, if often confusing, experience. Fall is the best time to find hummingbirds in the park. Late September and early October are good for migrating raptors. The best time of the day to bird in the park is early morning. Birds are generally more active at that hour and people are not. In the evenings the park can be almost crowded. In the early morning you share the park with the animals and a few joggers.

Hickory Hill Park: A Tour

The best way to see the birds at Hickory Hill Park is to walk slowly along any one of the paths. If you would like to follow my favorite route, start at the North Parking Lot. This walk will take upwards of 60 to ninety minutes. First walk the trail to the North Canyon. This trail starts at the edge of the woods near an old pump just north of the North Shelter. It leads under mature oak trees, and slopes

down toward the creek bottom. This woods is always good for warblers and White-breasted Nuthatches. At the bottom of the hill, where the trail enters a clearing, there is often a solitary picnic table. This clearing is a good place to scan the trees.

At this point, take a detour by following the trail to your left. It crosses the creek and leads into a weedy, grassy field where Eastern Meadowlarks breed. Walk along the fence that runs east and west, at least as far as the crest of the hill. Bell's Vireos can be seen and heard across the fence in the pasture to the north.

Now backtrack to the (picnic table) clearing and continue east on the trail. Yellow-breasted Chats have bred in this part of the park. The scrubby, overgrown field to your right is another good place for Bell's Vireos. Their bubbly call is often heard before you see the birds. The tall trees along the creek are good for Yellow Warblers and Common Yellowthroats may be found in the undergrowth.

Continue along this path until you come to a T-intersection in an open field. The creek which you have been following is about to join with the main branch of Ralston Creek, which flows to the south (your right). Take the right branch to the trail. You will be following the creek, although for the most part it will be out of sight. Field Sparrows are common through here. After you cross a small intermittent stream you will come to an earthen dam. The path more or less disappears. Follow the edge of the woods on your right and skirt the dam. One path starts at the top of the dam and runs west, but keep going down around the front of the dam. Just before you come to the creek you will see the path picking up again on your right. Again it will more or less parallel the creek. Shortly after re-entering the path you will come to a fork. Take the right hand path which leads through a scrubby field (good for Bell's Vireos) up a hill towards the woods. As you approach the woods, take time to look in the tree tops, for warblers.

At the top of the hill you will come to an intersection. A wooden post is located here, with #4 painted on it. The numbered posts are part of an interpretive nature trail. Guide books are available from the Iowa City Department of Parks and Recreation, 220 S. Gilbert St. The trail on your left slopes gradually through the woods. Follow it until you come into a large clearing. Ralston Creek is to your left behind some willow trees (if the beavers have not cut them all down). Continue until you get to the Campfire Circle. From this grassy field you have a good vantage point from which to see warblers foraging high in the trees. (If you enter from either of the South entrances, you would start your tour here.)

At this point backtrack, up the hill through the woods until you return to the intersection on top of the hill, and Post #4. Continue straight ahead and go down the steeper path into the South Canyon.

When the path reaches the bottom of the hill and starts to slope up, there will be a path leading to your left and Post #. Continue straight ahead and go down the steeper path into the South Canyon.

When the path reaches the bottom of the hill and starts to slope up, there will be a path leading to your left and Post #5. This is the South Canyon Trail. Before taking the South Canyon Trail, it is worthwhile to continue on straight for a few yards. This is the most moist woodland in the park and is a good place to see or hear Ovenbirds.

Walk west up the South Canyon — this is the best place to see White-eyed Vireos. Take brief side trips up the trails first to your right and then left.

The South Canyon Trail will gradually turn right and to up a steep hill. At the top of the hill you are on the edge of the large field and arboretum and near the North Parking Lot.

Another place not to miss is the lower (Eastern) end of the field below the North Pavilion. This is the best place for Bobolinks.

For the purposes of this article, I have included in the 'Park' a considerable amount of land which is not within the park boundaries. Specifically I have included the property which belongs to Regina High School to the East, St. Joseph's and Oakland Cemeteries, and the private property just north of the park boundaries. Although not legally within the park, this land is not posted. I have not discussed any land which is not accessible to the public. The park and this neighboring land contains about 100 acres.

Hickory Hill Park: Fauna

Connecticut Warblers are perhaps the biggest attraction of the park. They are regularly sighted in the spring, from 17 to 23 May. There have been fall sightings ranging from late August to early October. They seem to prefer dense underbrush, especially near streams. The sightings have most often been along the woods which runs from near the Campfire Circle to the east end of the South Canyon. Connecticut Warblers are very wary and spook easily. Often the best clue to their presence is their loud song. Mourning Warblers are also regularly found in the park. Their migration schedule follows that of the Connecticut Warbler.

Hickory Hill Park is unusual in that both Bell's and White-eyed Vireos breed here. Iowa is located at the north and east edge of Bell's range and at the western edge of the range of White-eyed Vireos. The field guides suggest that their habitat is similar, but I regularly find them in different places in the park, suggesting a different habitat preference. Bell's can be found in most of the places where the fields are being invaded by trees. They seem to prefer areas where there are tall grasses under trees that are 5-15' tall. There are large numbers of Bell's in the park. I would estimate that there have been upwards of 10-20 pairs breeding in or near the park, in some years. The best places to see Bell's are the fields across the fence north of the North Canyon and in the brushy fields along the creeks. In some years, the East side of Ralson Creek (towards Regina High School) has many Bell's. The White-eyed Vireos are found almost exclusively in the South Canyon, closer to woods. I do not believe there have been more than 2 pairs in recent years. The White-eyes arrive in early May, while Bell's do not arrive until mid-May. Both species leave by early September, but are hard to find after they stop singing.

Hawks are another highlight of the park and many species have been sighted here. Perhaps the most exciting raptor sight is to watch a large kettle of Broad-winged Hawks take off in the morning. Broad-wingeds often remain at their night perches in the woods until between 9:00 and 10:00 a.m. Mike Newlon saw 760 Broad-wingeds on the morning of September 16, 1984. Interestingly, on this same morning, 400 were seen north of Oxford, giving a minimum total of 1,160 Broad-wingeds roosting along a 10-15 miles stretch of the Iowa River Valley. The peak time to see this is between September 15-20. Broad-wingeds are not the only fall attraction: On September 18, 1977 Mike Newlon reported 258 Broad-wingeds, 27 Sharp-shinned, 4 Red-taileds, 1 Cooper's, 1 Goshawk, and 1 Osprey. The best way to watch raptors in HHP is to sit at the dam or the large field east of the North Parking Lot.

In 1981 a nest of Bewick's Wrens was found near the park, but they have not been seen since that year.

Although HHP is not known for its winter birds, there have been sightings of almost all of the 'winter finches'. The best place for this is in the conifers in Oakland Cemetery (due east of the park) and in the South Canyon. Pine Siskins can be seen almost every year in the cemetery. Saw-whet Owls, Bohemian Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks have been seen in the South Canyon. One winter, a Saw-wheat Owl spent several months roosting in the small clump of evergreens within feet of

the South Canyon Trail. The owl and most passersby seemed equally oblivious of each other's presence.

A checklist (Table 1) includes all the sightings known to me. It is broken down into six categories, which represent the present status of these species. They are Permanent Resident (P), Winter Resident (W), Summer Resident and likely breeding species (S), Species which Breed Nearby (B), and Common Migrants (M). Examples of these are Cardinal (P), Northern Junco (W), and House Wren (S). B denotes those species which, although they probably do not breed within the park, breed near enough that you might regularly expect to see them during the summer, Chimney Swift is one such species. Regular Migrants (M) includes those migrants which you might be expected to see almost every year such as Wilson's Warbler and Yellow-rumped Warbler. The Species Sighted (X) category includes very rare migrants (Prairie Warbler), and those species which have only been seen once or twice. The decision as to whether a species belongs in the M or X category is arbitrary.

In addition to the 189 species seen in the park, five other forms have been seen. Both phases of the snow goose have been reported. Two western races have been seen in the park, the Oregon race of the Northern Junco and the Spotted race of the Rufous-sided Towhee. Two hybrids have also been reported, Brewster's Warbler (Golden-winged x Blue-winged Warbler) and a hybrid Yellow-shafted x Red-shafted Flicker.

This list will grow slowly in future years, although seven species were added to the park list between 1982 and 1984. They are: Black Tern, Herring Gull, Prothonotary Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Hooded Warbler, Brewer's Blackbird and Henslow's Sparrow. I believe the best way to increase the species list is to spend time looking up at the sky, during March through May and again in August through November. In this manner someone should see more shorebird and waterfowl flyovers. It is possible that in the years when there is water impounded by the dam during migration that shorebirds or waterfowl may be found.

Two common species of birds are absent from the list (Loggerhead Shrike and Blue-winged Teal) and I find it hard to believe that these birds have never been in the park, so I believe that we have just not seen them on their occasional visits.

If anyone has any information on species not yet on the list, I would appreciate hearing from him or her, so that the list can remain as up-to-date as possible.

Various mammals live in the park. Gray squirrels and chipmunks are common. Other species such as fox squirrels and an occasional deer and fox may be seen. Mole tunnels often can be found underfoot, crossing the paths near the wooded areas of the park. In some years beaver have built dams on the creek.

Hickory Hill Park: Flora

There are a variety of plant associations found within the park. The bird species that you see will depend in part on the habitat that you are in. In the uplands there is a drier, more mature woodland. The dominant trees are Red Oak and not surprisingly Shagbark and Bitternut Hickories. Along the creek bottoms, a different woodland is found, featuring willows, Silver Maple and Basswood, as well as herbaceous plants in the marshy area. The fields which are undergoing succession from open pasture towards forest are dominated by multiflora rose and honey locust. A few places in the park are maintained as open lawn.

My favorite spring flowers are the impressive stands of White Trout Lily (which for some reason is also known as Dog Toothed Violet) and the occasional Prairie Trillium. Also to be found are Wood Anemone, Mertensia or Virginia Cowslip, Wild Geranium, Jacob's-Ladder, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, May Apple,

HICKORY HILLS PARK

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TABLE 1. A CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS
OF HICKORY HILL PARK
IOWA CITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, IOWA

CORMORANTS		
X Double-crested Cormorant		
HERONS		
X Great Blue Heron		
X Great Egret		
X Green-backed Heron		
X Black-crowned Night-Heron		
WATERFOWL		
X Snow Goose		
X Canada Goose		
X Wood Duck		
X Mallard		
X Lesser Scaup		
HAWKS ETC.		
X Turkey Vulture		
X Osprey		
X Bald Eagle		
X Northern Harrier		
M Sharp-shinned Hawk		
X Cooper's Hawk		
X Northern Goshawk		
X Red-shouldered Hawk		
M Broad-winged Hawk		
M Red-tailed Hawk		
X Rough-legged Hawk		
X American Kestrel		
GALINACEOUS BIRDS		
R Ring-necked Pheasant		
X *Wild Turkey		
X Northern Bobwhite		
RAILS		
X Virginia Rail		
X Sora		
FLOVERS		
X Lesser Golden-Plover		
X Killdeer		
SANDPIPERS		
X Lesser Yellowlegs		
X Solitary Sandpiper		
X Spotted Sandpiper		
X Common Snipe		
M American Woodcock		
GULLS ETC.		
X Ring-billed Gull		
X Herring Gull		
X Caspian Tern		
X Forster's Tern		
X Black Tern		
DOVES		
R Rock Dove		
R Mourning Dove		
CUCKOO		
S Black-billed Cuckoo		
S Yellow-billed Cuckoo		
OWLS		
X Eastern Screech-Owl		
R Great Horned Owl		
R Barred Owl		
X Long-eared Owl		
X Northern Saw-whet Owl		
NIGHTHAWKS THRU KINGFISHERS		
B Common Nighthawk		
X Whip-poor-will		
B Chimney Swift		
M Ruby-throated Hummingbird		
X Belted Kingfisher		
WOODPECKERS		
R Red-headed Woodpecker		
R Red-bellied Woodpecker		
M Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		
R Downy Woodpecker		
R Hairy Woodpecker		
S Northern Flicker		
X Pileated Woodpecker		
JAYS THRU CREEPERS		
R Blue Jay		
R American Crow		
R Black-capped Chickadee		
R Tufted Titmouse		
X Red-breasted Nuthatch		
R White-breasted Nuthatch		
M Brown Creeper		
WRENS		
X Carolina Wren		
X *Bewick's Wren		
S House Wren		
X Winter Wren		
M Sedge Wren		
M Marsh Wren		
KINGLETS THRU THRUSHES		
M Golden-crowned Kinglet		
M Ruby-crowned Kinglet		
M Blue-gray Gnatcatcher		
M Eastern Bluebird		
S Veery		
M Gray-cheeked Thrush		
M Swainson's Thrush		
M Hermit Thrush		
S Wood Thrush		
S American Robin		
MIMICS THRU STARLINGS		
S Gray Catbird		
S Brown Thrasher		
X *Bohemian Waxwing		
R Cedar Waxwing		
X Northern Shrike		
R European Starling		
VIREOS		
S White-eyed Vireo		
S Bell's Vireo		
X Solitary Vireo		
X Yellow-throated Vireo		
X Warbling Vireo		
M Philadelphia Vireo		
M Red-eyed Vireo		
WARBLERS		
M Blue-winged Warbler		
M Golden-winged Warbler		
M Tennessee Warbler		
M Orange-crowned Warbler		
M Nashville Warbler		
X Northern Parula		
S Yellow Warbler		
M Chestnut-sided Warbler		
M Magnolia Warbler		
M Cape May Warbler		
M Black-throated Blue Warbler		
M Yellow-rumped Warbler		
M Black-throated Green Warbler		
M Blackburnian Warbler		
X *Pine Warbler		
X *Prairie Warbler		
M Palm Warbler		
M Bay-breasted Warbler		
M Blackpoll Warbler		
M Cerulean Warbler		
WARBLERS (Con't.)		
WARBLERS (Con't.)		
M Black-and-white Warbler		
S American Redstart		
X Prothonotary Warbler		
X Worm-eating Warbler		
S Ovenbird		
M Northern Waterthrush		
M Louisiana Waterthrush		
X Kentucky Warbler		
X Connecticut Warbler		
X Mourning Warbler		
S Common Yellowthroat		
X Hooded Warbler		
M Wilson's Warbler		
M Canada Warbler		
X Yellow-breasted Chat		
TANAGERS		
S Scarlet Tanager		
CARDINALS, ETC.		
R Northern Cardinal		
S Rose-breasted Grosbeak		
S Indigo Bunting		
X Dickcissel		
SPARROWS		
S Rufous-sided Towhee		
M American Tree Sparrow		
S Chipping Sparrow		
X Clay-colored Sparrow		
S Field Sparrow		
X Vesper Sparrow		
X Savannah Sparrow		
X Grasshopper Sparrow		
X Henslow's Sparrow		
X Le Conte's Sparrow		
M Fox Sparrow		
R Song Sparrow		
M Lincoln's Sparrow		
M Swamp Sparrow		
M White-throated Sparrow		
M White-crowned Sparrow		
X Harris' Sparrow		
M Dark-eyed Junco		
BLACKBIRDS & ORIOLES		
S Bobolink		
S Red-winged Blackbird		
S Eastern Meadowlark		
X Rusty Blackbird		
X Brewer's Blackbird		
S Common Grackle		
S Brown-headed Cowbird		
S Orchard Oriole		
S Northern Oriole		
FINCHES		
X *Pine Grosbeak		
M Purple Finch		
X Red Crossbill		
X White-winged Crossbill		
X Common Redpoll		
M Pine Siskin		
R American Goldfinch		
X Evening Grosbeak		
WEAVER FINCHES		
R House Sparrow		

* possibly feral
* casual species in Iowa

boundaries shown are only approximate. The area enclosed by dashed lines to the north is an area purchased by Iowa City around 1980. Although it is legally part of the park, as I understand it, this land will be leased out as pasture. The names of some of the landmarks shown on the map are unofficial. Many birders use these names but no one else does. One of the reasons for including them on the map is to make it easier to describe a location to someone else. The forest edges shown are somewhat arbitrary. For the most part, places that have tall trees scattered about with open areas in between or grassy areas underfoot are not shown as forest. Also not shown as forest are some thick, almost impenetrable areas of brush and saplings. The map is based on the Iowa City's 1974 Flood Plain Maps.

Hickory Hill Park: The Future

Several changes have been made in the park in recent years. In addition to these obvious changes, Iowa City's population is increasing. This will place more demands on the park. I hope that the nature of HHP will remain unchanged. An arboretum is being developed on the hillside around the pavilion at the North Entrance. This will increase the number of woody plants that are found in the field area, but if maintained, should keep the forest from encroaching on the field.

An earthen dam was built across the creek in 1983. It is designed to temporarily hold back the water flowing through Ralston Creek during floods and gradually release them over a 24-48 hour period. It appears that the dam and some land surrounding it will be maintained as a grassy area. The effects that the dam itself will have on the upstream area are difficult to predict. If it works as it should it will probably kill some of the existing vegetations, i.e. those species that cannot survive having their roots underwater for 24 hours. One might expect to see a few new flood tolerant species coming into the flood plain. I doubt that any of these changes would be very severe unless the frequency and severity of floods is greater than that which has been predicted. Increasing upstream development could have this effect. The effect of the dam on fauna would be equally variable, depending on the floods. In most years, I doubt that the dam will have any effect, other than providing more open grassy habitat at the dam itself. In years when a large flood occurs, species which are nesting behind the dam will obviously lose that brood if the nest is below the water. Many species will breed again if the loss occurs early enough in the season.

A subdivision was constructed just south and east of the park's boundary, a few years ago, eliminating some of the woodland which adjoined the park.

In addition to these changes, nature is also working on the park gradually turning some areas from field into forest. The area just east of the mowed field by the North Pavilion is changing very rapidly, as are both the North and South Canyons. Over the past 10 years in this area I have seen a shift from open areas to places with bushes and many trees (some reaching 20 feet in height). It is not known what effects these changes will have on the park's wildlife. The change from field towards forest will certainly change the species seen in those areas.

Additional copies of the checklist and map are available from the author for \$.50 and a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Acknowledgements

The bird list is the result of the cheerful cooperation of many Iowa City birders. Special thanks are offered to Mike Newlon, Tom Kent, Rich DeCoster, Tom Staudt, Tom Shires, James Huntington, Carl Bendorf and John Cordell. Without their help this checklist would be far less complete.

Lee Tippy in the Iowa City Engineer's Office and Karen Christner in Parks and Recreation were helpful in drawing the map.

Ken Jensen supplied some of the information about the flora.

Janet Hollis, Mike Newlon and Diane Ochs provided editorial assistance.

1984 Christmas Bird Count

W. ROSS SILCOCK
TABOR, IOWA

This year, with its relatively mild late fall and the prospect of an early CBC start date of December 15, many of us were ready to rush out and set records. However the weather played one of its usual Iowa tricks and the first day of the count period was probably the worst, with rain, sleet, etc. in most of the state. Of the 40 reporting localities, 15 had their counts on this miserable opening day, with results generally disappointing. Cedar Rapids, with extensive coverage (16 field parties and 20 feeder watchers!), was the best of the first-day counts, but could manage only an average tally (for Cedar Rapids) of 54 species. Iowa City's total of 49 on the same day was one of their lowest in some time. However the next day was far nicer, and several counts, including Davenport, took advantage of the nicer weather to achieve good success. The weather continued rather mild through the count period, reaching an incredible 66 degrees at Shanandoah, the only count held on Dec. 28, a Friday. Observers there found themselves looking for shorebirds in puddles in farm fields, and my car was blown off a road so soft and muddy that Ione Getscher and I could only sit helpless while it toppled over the edge in slow motion! Rather amazingly, no count this year reported a minus temperature reading, the coldest being Larry Farmer's Westfield count, which was held on January 2, and started out at 3 degrees above zero. Snow was a factor only in a few northwest Iowa counts held early in the county period, the deepest snow being the 10 inches at Sac County December 15.

Overall, 40 counts reported this year, equal to last year's record high. Two counts did not repeat from last year, Iowa Falls and Marble Rock, but they were replaced by Lehigh and Amana, two new counts. This year there was somewhat of a drop in observer participation, down to about 590 from last year's 616, but considering the weather on "opening day", this was a good effort. The relatively mild fall however had a marked effect on the tally of species found: a remarkable 124, second only to the 126 found in 1980, and far above the average of 113 found in the last three years.

Davenport again had the highest number of species, with 70 (including a Ringed Turtle-Dove, see below). Other high counts were Oakville with 63 and Muscatine with 60. Good counts for their areas of the state were Sioux City with 50 and Cedar Falls with 45. In terms of individual birds, far and away the highest counts were in the southwest where Omaha had 280,782, mostly blackbirds, and Shenandoah had 213,822, mostly Snow Geese and Mallards. Next in number of individuals but far behind was DeSoto NWR with 19,513, also a southwest Iowa count.

It is interesting to look at the structure of the various counts. The typical count has a few field parties and a few feeder watchers. However Fort Dodge had only one field observer and 13 feeder observers! Considering the lack of field observers, the total of 25 species was good for that part of the state. A similar count, but with more field observers, was Spirit Lake. Here, there were three field parties, and 14 feeder observers, for a species count of 40. No doubt the extra field coverage added a few species. This year, the average count had 2.7 field parties, and 3.5 feeder observers. I would say that the field party figure is probably too low, with four the fewest which would ensure reasonably good coverage.

This year waterfowl were back, both in terms of species and individuals. In the southwest, Snow Geese were abundant, and Canada Geese statewide were at an 11-year high. Conversely, Mallards were down significantly, a trend which is alarming Fish and Wildlife personnel. This year's total of 50,178 was the second lowest in the last 11 years, last year's 10,432 being the lowest. Key raptors, such as

Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel were in normal numbers, but Rough-legged Hawk hit an 11-year low of 38, after last year's relatively high figure of 89. This drop is probably due to the mild fall and lack of snow cover to our north. Accipiters were in good numbers, with a nice total of 16 Goshawks reported, mostly well-documented. Kim Eckert has said in *American Birds* that some Goshawks are probably being identified as Cooper's Hawks, but most of the Goshawks seen in Iowa are adults, which is to be expected if incursions into our state result from poor food supplies, as this would result in poor breeding success and fewer immatures. In Iowa, immatures (most likely to be confused with Cooper's) would mostly be seen during migration periods if at all, as they tend to winter further south than adults.

Gallinaceous birds were interesting this year. As expected, Northern Bobwhite was at an 11-year low, with only 113 reported, while Ring-necked Pheasant was at the lowest level since 1976. Also at very low levels were Gray Partridge (15) and Ruffed Grouse (3). Over the previous three years these two species have averaged 182 and 14 respectively. However the king of this group, Wild Turkey, continued its success story with 173 reported, three times its 11-year average. Obviously, cold winters do not seem to be limiting for this species.

Strangely, Common Snipe were at a low ebb despite the mild fall, only 14 reported, compared with the average of about 32. Ring-billed Gull was at an 11-year high, but Herring Gull was only average. Perhaps this was a result of the relatively mild fall and extensive open water. Doves and owls were mostly at normal levels, although Long-eared Owl was at an 11-year low, only three being reported. It is hard to say whether this resulted from reduced observer effort or was in fact a low year for this species.

Woodpeckers were all in average numbers, although Red-headed Woodpecker was notably absent from western Iowa. Horned Lark was in average numbers, but the other field flocking birds, Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting, were somewhat below and above their 11-year averages, respectively; overall, an average year for these species.

The most commonly seen Iowa CBC Birds, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatches and Brown Creepers were at average levels, but Red-breasted Nuthatch was low, only half its 11-year average.

Only four wrens were found, all Winter Wrens, low for this species, which normally averages about 14. No Carolina Wrens were reported, continuing a trend which has seen only 9 reported since 1978, compared to 89 in the years 1975-78. Maybe the one coming to Renee Baade's feeder in Des Moines will (with some help) repopulate the state! Eastern Bluebird was down, but not drastically, as was American Robin, both at about 70% of their 11-year averages. This year was the first since 1957 that no Northern Mockingbirds were found, not even at Lamoni. The 11-year average for Mockingbirds is five. Waxwings were up, Cedars almost twice their 11-year average, and the 60 reported from Dubuque alone constituted the highest yearly total in 11 years.

Shrikes were interesting. There were normal numbers of Northerns reported, nine, but the 11 Loggerheads were only half the average number of 23 usually found. At Lamoni, Gillaspay noted that this was the first year in 25 that no shrikes were found there. Apparently the Loggerheads were wintering further south this year, for some reason.

Ten Yellow-rumped Warblers was the second-highest number reported in 11 years, far above the average of four, but Rufous-sided Towhee was at an 11-year low, with but one reported. Normally, about 7 are found on Iowa CBCs. Last year 13 were found, suggesting that these birds (normally the Spotted race) come to Iowa

in colder winters.

American Tree Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco were about normal in numbers, the latter perhaps down slightly. Song Sparrow however hit an 11-year low of 240, compared with an average of 498, but conversely, the 98 Swamp Sparrows were double the average. The high numbers of Swamp Sparrows must be related to the commonly open streams, but the reason for low numbers of Song Sparrows is hard to figure. Zonotrichid Sparrows were all significantly down, at about half usual levels.

Perhaps one of the big stories of this count was the blackbird totals. Omaha observers found a roost near Glenwood which resulted in an incredible state total and easy 11-year high of 257,075 Red-winged Blackbirds. Tagging along in the same roost were Rusty Blackbirds, also resulting in an 11-year high, of 713, and Common Grackles, giving about twice the normal total, with 6,193 reported. On the other hand, Brown-headed Cowbird was at normal levels and Meadowlarks were at an 11-year low of only 61 birds. Perhaps last winter was devastating for those Meadowlarks near the northern edge of the wintering range, where Iowa is located.

Winter finches were generally average or absent, with the noticeable exception of Pine Siskin, which was at an 11-year high of 1,599, about four times the average level. Notable here were the Crossbills, both species being often seen in Iowa this winter, but only Reds reported on the CBCs. The 46 Red Crossbills reported is a good number, but pales beside the 183 reported in 1977. No White-winged Crossbills, Pine Grosbeaks, or Evening Grosbeaks were reported, and only 31 Common Redpolls, about one quarter of the 11-year average.

Best Birds

The best of the year had to be the no-fewer-than-six new species for Iowa CBCs. These were, in taxonomic order: the incredible **Bean Goose** at DeSoto NWR, now generally considered to be a wild bird of one of the Siberian races, and which may have come to the Central Flyway last winter with the very cold Christmas weather which brought the Slaty-backed Gull to Alton, Illinois; the very tardy **Greater Yellowlegs** well-documented from Des Moines; a very cooperative **Mountain Bluebird** at Lamoni, which even I managed to see (after two tries); a bird identified as a **Solitary Vireo** at Lost Nation, the documentation for which has me convinced, especially the description of the calls, and which can be a very late migrant; Iowa's first but probably not last winter **Great-tailed Grackle**, found with the large number of blackbirds near Glenwood on the Omaha count, and the **Rosy Finch** at Tristate, seen near Nebraska City, in Nebraska. The all-time Iowa CBC total species count is now 190.

Notable Misses

Alluded to above was the absence of Northern Mockingbird, the first miss since 1957. However, as befits a year when 124 species were found, this seems to be the only bad miss.

Comments on Species Reporting

Documentation is generally very good. Perhaps the worst problem was the lack of documentation for certain rare species. In this category, and thus dropped from the compilation, was a **Ferruginous Hawk** at DeSoto NWR. This bird was described to me personally as a typical light phase bird, but other observers mentioned a dark bird, so in the absence of any written description, I had to leave it out. The only other species left out was **Vesper Sparrow**. A flock of 40 was described from Sac County, but because this would be amazing for northern Iowa in winter, and despite the credibility of the observer, I thought it best to put it aside. The description noted "sparrow-sized, brown-striped, white tail feathers" in a brushy fence row. My first thought was Tree Sparrows, which may show ob-

vious white edgings at times in the outer tail feathers, but may not fit the description "brown-streaked", at least on the breast. However the description did not say where the brown streaks were. Overall, I was not convinced that these were Vesper Sparrows, a species which occurs on occasion in southeast Iowa in December, but even there only in small numbers.

Another interesting species, not because of identification problems, was Ringed Turtle-Dove at a Rock Island feeder. Last year, I dropped this bird because it is not on the State List, even though that report may contribute to its acceptance at some future time. This sighting is from Illinois. Intriguing were the 12 Peafowl on the North Linn count, apparently breeding ferally for some 12 years. These were left out for the same reason as the Ringed Turtle-Dove, but also may form a countable population in the future. After all, we count Wild Turkeys which have been re-established only recently!

SPECIES RECORDED FROM THREE OR FEWER COUNTS

Double-crested Cormorant; Lake Red Rock (1).
 Tundra Swan: Princeton (9).
 Bean Goose: DeSoto NWR (1).
 Gr. White-fronted Goose: DeSoto NWR (7); Lamoni (2); Sheanandoah (17).
 Ross' Goose; Shenandoah (5)
 Northern Shoveler: Mason City (2); Oakville (1).
 American Wigeon: Des Moines (1); Jamaica (5); Mason City (1).
 Greater Scaup: Shanandoah (3).
 Bufflehead: Alleman (2).
 Oldsquaw: Rathbun (1).
 White-winged Scoter: Clinton (3).
 Red-breasted Merganser: Clinton (12); Ottumwa (2).
 Red-shouldered Hawk: Cedar Falls (1); Decorah (1).
 Golden Eagle: Yellow River Forest (1).
 Merlin: Cedar Falls (1); Shenandoah (1).
 Prairie Falcon: Tristate (1).
 Gray Partridge: Eldora (2); Spirit Lake (5); Swaledale (8).
 Ruffed Grouse: Decorah (4); Dubuque (2).
 American Coot: Cedar Rapids (2); Shenandoah (2), Spirit Lake (50).
 Greater Yellowlegs: Des Moines (1).
 Glaucous Gull: Dubuque (1).
 Bonaparte's Gull: Oakville (3).
 Ringed Turtle Dove: Davenport (1)
 Common Barn-Owl: Sioux City (1).
 Long-eared Owl: Sioux City (1); Shenandoah (2).
 Northern Saw-whet Owl: Cherokee (1).
 Mountain Bluebird: Lamoni (1).
 Hermit Thrush: North Linn (1).
 Varied Thrush: Spirit Lake (1).
 Gray Catbird: Cedar Rapids (1).
 Bohemian Waxwing: Dubuque (60).
 Solitary Vireo: Lost Nation (1).
 Western Meadowlark : Lake Red Rock (18); Tristate (4); Westfield (1).
 Brewer's Blackbird: North Linn (3); Omaha (7); Princeton (1).
 Great-tailed Grackle: Omaha (1).
 Rosy Finch: Tristate (1).
 Rufous-sided Towhee: Omaha (1).
 Field Sparrow: Oakville (1); Rathbun (8).
 Savannah Sparrow: Davenport (1); Marshalltown (1); Rathbun (1).

BIRDS UNIDENTIFIED TO SPECIES

Duck sp.: Dubuque (5); Omaha (1).
 Merganser sp.: Dubuque (105).
 Accipiter sp.: Burlington (1); Lost Nation (4); Omaha (1).
 Falcon sp.: Omaha (1).
 Gull sp.: Cedar Rapids (2); Dubuque (4).
 Owl sp.: Ames (1); Dubuque (1).
 Shrike sp.: Oakville (1).
 Blackbird sp.: Ames (1); DeSoto NWR (236); Omaha (63).
 Sparrow sp.: DeSoto NWR (2).

OTHER RACES

Red-shafted Flicker: Burlington (1).
 Oregon Junco: Ames (1); Cedar Rapids (2).

Location	Date	COUNT DATA										Sky Conditions	Number Species	Total Individuals
		Observers	Field Parties	Field Party Hours	Feeder Observers	Feeder Party Hours	Miles By Car	Miles On Foot	Temp Range	Wind	Snow Depth			
Alleman	Dec. 23	3	1	8	0	1	94	2	35-20	N 5-10	0	1-10%	34	3054
Amara	Dec. 30	8	2	14	0	0	84	6	20-30	VAR 0-5	0	0-90%	37	1384
Ames	Dec. 15	27	7	51	2	0	245	40	25-40	SE 5-25	2	5-90%	45	7428
Burlington	Dec. 22	13	4	32	13	20	60	24	20-35	S 15-20	0	90%	56	10270
Cedar Falls	Dec. 16	6	5	37	0	0	267	24	38-30	NW 15-35	2	90-95%	45	2619
Cedar Rapids	Dec. 15	39	16	131	20	48	439	65	30-36	SE 0-10	1	50-95%	54	8163
Cherokee	Dec. 16	16	5	41	3	8	297	6	40-23	SSW 15-25	1	%	32	4739
Clinton	Dec. 29	11	4	42	0	0	350	10	28-36	NW 10-20	0	50-70%	59	7887
Davenport	Dec. 16	37	17	93	8	24	590	45	48-57	E,S,W 6-26	0	100%	69	10971
Decorah	Dec. 15	11	4	26	0	0	202	7	17-37	SE 5-15	4	0-75%	41	3830
Des Moines	Dec. 15	14	6	35	1	6	161	20	25-41	SE 7-10	0	75-90%	44	3526
DeSoto NWR	Dec. 29	28	6	59	0	0	317	28	16-25	N 20-30	0	30%	51	19513
Dubuque	Dec. 15	20	8	49	2	4	235	40	30-40	S 0-10	3	90%	46	3687
Eldora	Dec. 22	13	3	25	6	13	150	13	12-25	NW 5-15	0	0-90%	34	1645
Fort Dodge	Dec. 16	14	1	4	13	32	37	2	38	W 17	1	%	25	676
Iowa City	Dec. 15	32	10	65	2	2	447	32	31-45	SE 0-20	0	20%	49	5350
Jamaica	Dec. 20	1	1	12	0	0	91	5	18-35	S 2-10	1	0-100%	41	4964
Lake Red Rock	Dec. 16	13	6	24	2	4	220	4	44-50	SW 22	0	90-89%	40	2657
Lamoni	Dec. 22	4	2	20	0	0	125	5	15-36	W 10	0		36	1332
Lehigh	Dec. 29	5	2	7	0	0	40	3	18-28	W 15	1	100%	11	236
Lost Nation	Dec. 20	16	5	38	16	3	190	13	19-34	W 5-12	1	0-90%	45	4760
Marshalltown	Dec. 15	16	4	15	5	8	2	2	30-45	N 5-15	4	5-10%	34	1955
Mason City	Dec. 15	16	6	26	2	7	209	8	23-36	SE 5-20	3	2-10%	32	4144
Muscatine	Dec. 23	12	4	41	0	0	352	14	30-45	W 5-15	0	10-90%	60	7869
North Linn	Dec. 29	21	8	54	2	16	468	44	18-24	NW 10-20	0	100%	46	3975
Oakville	Dec. 21	13	5	48	0	0	441	12	33-52	E,S,W 6-25	0	30-100%	63	13352
Omaha	Dec. 22	10	73	2	10	489	52	13-37	NW 0-15	0	90%	55	280782	
Oskaloosa	Jan 2	2	1	9	3	10	100	0	15-30	SW 5	5		28	1721
Ottumwa	Dec. 22	9	3	52	1	4	83	12	15-25	NW 12	0	10-50%	33	2482
Princeton	Dec. 17	10	6	36	0	0	345	7	27-37	W 5-15	0	100%	51	4206
Rathbun	Dec. 15	31	12	105	4	12	600	5	36-56	NE 5	0	90-99%	53	5538
Sac County	Dec. 15	14	5	29	4	11	166	13	25-30	E-SE 5	10	25-50%	26	1164
Shenandoah	Dec. 28	10	5	37	2	5	364	10	61-66	SW 15-25	0	100%	59	213822
Sioux City	Dec. 15	27	6	35	8	10	128	32	22-38	SE 8-10	5	10%	50	13536
Spirit Lake	Dec. 15	6	3	27	14	56	311	7	23-39	SE 15-22	5	30-90%	40	5637
Swaledale	Dec. 15	7	3	8	3	22	54	6	35	SE 10	6	10%	19	587
Tristate	Dec. 15	6	2	18	0	0	188	2	28-38	E 0-15	4	90-100%	45	6220
Waterloo	Dec. 15	9	4	32	1	2	355	13	24-39	SSE 5-20	2	90-95%	36	2541
Westfield	Jan 2	7	3	17	1	2	97	14	3-26	WSW 0-8	1	0-25%	32	1372
Yellow R. Forest	Dec. 29	9	3	21	0	0	182	9	15-19	NW 5-20	0	0-75%	34	1661

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	Alleman	Amara	Ames	Burlington	Cedar Falls	Cherokee	Clinton	Cedar Rapids	Davenport	Decorah	Des Moines	Dubuque	Elkader	Fort Dodge	Iowa City	Jamaica	Lamoni	Lehigh
Great Blue Heron									1			1						
Snow Goose											3547	3						
Canada Goose	85		1		2		50	170	21		1100	65					509	
Wood Duck					2		1	1		1								
Green-winged Teal									1									4
American Black Duck				6	2		31	4	27		5	5			3	2		
Mallard	2009		31	6004	218	100	1926	1392	1452		6177	800	338		3	692	3968	1
Northern Pintail									1		37						2	
Gadwall																		4
Canvasback				13														
Redhead				6					8									
Ring-necked Duck				50					1			3					1	
Lesser Scaup	2		1	50			100	6	3								2	
Common Goldeneye			1	6			94	24	20		88	3				1		
Hooded Merganser					1		1		1		1						1	
Common Merganser	15			60	1		86		2		167	5				2	5	
Bald Eagle	4			69			28		17		56	2	9					
Northern Harrier		1	1	1							4			1			2	
Sharp-shinned Hawk					1						2	1					1	
Cooper's Hawk				1			3	1	1		1		1				2	
Northern Goshawk					1		2	1	1			2					1	
Red-tailed Hawk	8	15	3	31	2	8	19	12	27	26	43	14	10	10	1	10	1	16
Rough-legged Hawk		1		3	1		1		1	3	2	1			1			
Buteo sp.								2			1		2					
American Kestrel	3		3	8	2	6	8	2	24	5	9	6	3	1			2	3
Ring-necked Pheasant	2	3	48	2	2	8	3	48	8	1	45	26		5	1	3	3	11
Wild Turkey										1						4		
Northern Bobwhite								10			20							21
Killdeer									3			1						
Common Snipe			1	2			1		2	1						1		
Ring-billed Gull				1495	9		16	1	35			9	83				1	
Herring Gull	1	80		43			186		390			11				24		
Rock Dove	65	44	188	92	203	488	447	196	1428	184	92	20	57	40	9	112	4	27
Mourning Dove		6	25	14	26	26	4	173	219	9		5	8					3
Eastern Screech Owl				1			5	2	5		1					4	2	1
Great Horned Owl	1	2	6	3	5	1	10	3	14		9	2	1	4		2	5	1
Barred Owl	2	1		1	4		2	10	5		1			1		6	1	1
Short-eared Owl							1											
Belted Kingfisher	1	2	3	1	2	1	3	8	5	4		3	6	1		5	1	4
Red-headed Woodpecker	5	19	1	24	5	1	23	67	19	4		25	9			50		11
Red-bell. Woodpecker	6	8	11	20	13	6	24	46	27	26	35	10	33	8	3	33	6	1
Yellow-bellied Saps.								2	1									
Downy Woodpecker	14	8	50	27	37	27	55	120	88	22	69	42	41	30	11	81	12	15
Hairy Woodpecker	6	6	9	3	6	19	12	35	17	11	9	18	15	8	4	13	1	3
Northern Flicker	8	23	9	20	1	2	9	15	19	4	114	8	1	4		74	3	1
Pileated Woodpecker		1		2	1		3		3	2			3					
Horned Lark			65	2	3	89	3		7	7	32	49	2		12	2		40
Blue Jay	14	72	125	97	58	45	296	342	197	135	75	25	105	50	17	220	16	57
American Crow	45	275	205	359	166	280	341	254	701	318	31	220	117	96	74	154	24	62
Black-capped Chickadee	25	80	187	53	142	50	170	633	368	46	167	216	138	81	55	242	61	161
Tufted Titmouse	2		4	16			7	74	53	3		13	34	5			21	
White-br. Nuthatch	11	10	38	20	27	10	58	139	85	36	32	44	76	40	9	96	16	21
Red-breasted			2	2		3	6	3	2	2								
Brown Creeper		1	8	4			13		38	4	4		7	2	1	9	1	
Winter Wren			1				1		1	1								
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				1					5									
Golden-cr. Kinglet			1							7	5					3		
Eastern Bluebird				2			7		3			5						
Brown Thrasher								2	1		1		3			4		6
American Robin	2	15	3	14	1		35	29	9	1	16	40	3	1		52	11	22
Cedar Waxwing	4	28		30	48	35	162	309	35	101	14	2	196	34		153	2	12
Northern Shrike						3				2								
Loggerhead Shrike																		
European Starling	310	110	1791	699	690	711	981	582	2013	350	4119	317		173	63	728	43	203
Yellow-rumped Warbler				4							3							34
Northern Cardinal	17	66	76	108	87	21	238	598	440	122	84	89	213	81	23	176	24	40
Fox Sparrow			1						4	1			7					1
Song Sparrow		9	6	10			20	21	34	1	3	4	15			17	1	
Swamp Sparrow		4		1			1	1	5							12	1	
White-thr. Sparrow								12	3				1					
White-cr. Sparrow	1						8	1	1									
Harris' Sparrow	7		1			3		1			58	1						
Dark-eyed Junco	97	105	714	259	189	336	474	932	667	856	305	457	484	129	85	483	91	156
American Tree Sparrow	89	115	891	81	69	325	325	656	383	336	701	563	188	158	6	915	32	213
Lapland Longspur			117									7				30		30
Snow Bunting																		
Red-winged Blackbird		1	1	38	2	80	44	110	40	50				1		38		
Meadowlark sp.		2								1								
Rusty Blackbird								10	10									
Common Grackle		2	6	10	4		2	6	14		9			26	4	2		
Brown-headed Cowbird							2		2		18							
Purple Finch		6	1	6	2	1	93	20	3	56		30		2	1	50		14
Red Crossbill				1	12													
Common Redpoll																		
Pine Siskin		8	18	367	8	197	1	27	149	15	132	52	116	3	4			
American Goldfinch	30	19	112	67	43	128	56	210	246	37	173	58	93	99	26	69	29	46
House Sparrow	170	235	2650	483	482	1806	1324	894	1486	1055	1602	313	770	534	259	732	65	109

Lost Nation	Lake Red Rock	Marshalltown	Mason City	Muscatine	North Linn	Oakville	Omaha	Oskaloosa	Ottumwa	Princeton	Raubun	Sac County	Sioux City	Shenandoah	Spirit Lake	Swaledale	Trustate	Waterloo	Westfield	Yellow River Forest	Total	# CTS	% CTS		
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	200					12					1		6		210		3				793	16	40		
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223	197	55	156		186	117	2590	186	49	54	244	205	25	44	13	53	32	124	62	18	118	8492	40	100	
240	28	42	81		271	198	117	486	17	44	139	121	47	346	54	219	11	20	27	74	44	5514	40	100	
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705	40	187	364		224	364	494	457	275	124	502	610	76	460	176	761	6	227	307	467	58	12950	40	100	
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	12	46	350																			878	7	18	
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Mountain Bluebird In Decatur County

JEFFREY R. LIVINGSTON

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LAMONI, IOWA 50140

The participants of the Lamoni Christmas Bird count received a rare treat this year, a Mountain Bluebird! The bird was sighted three miles north of Lamoni, Decatur County, Iowa on December 22, 1984.

Dan Long and I were walking a fence row of cedar trees playing a E. Screech Owl call to make the birds show themselves. As we reached the end of the fence, Dan noticed a strange bird above him in the tree. He called me over to help identify it. After about five minutes we were convinced that was a Mountain Bluebird. We immediately started noting key points about the bird so that we could document it. The bird cooperated completely, it stayed in open view listening to the Screech Owl call. After about five minutes our bluebird flew to another group of cedars about 100 feet away. Dan and I were so excited our only thoughts were to get Donald Gillaspey and his son Jim. Donald is the compiler for the count and we wanted him to see our rare find. We returned 45 minutes later and had a hard time finding the bird again. We soon found it on a nearby pond drinking from a small spot of water

that wasn't frozen. This pond later proved to be the easiest place to find the bird.

The bird was a deep sky blue on the head and back, with the upper tail coverts and the primary wing feathers being a brighter blue. The breast was grayish white with a slight hint of blue. It was darker at the top getting lighter towards the belly. Although there was no eye ring, the feathers around the eye were a little lighter in color. The light gray on the neck extended around the sides, almost to the back of the neck. The bill was long, thin, and dark. The descriptions fits a male in fresh plumage.

The next morning, after a few phone calls by Donald, I was back out at the pond helping Tom Kent and Francis Moore find the bird. After looking for about an hour we finally found the bird on the pond. When the bird flew to a group of trees, they moved closer and took some photographs. All and all, I must admit, this was the most exciting Christmas count I have been on. I last saw the Mountain Bluebird in this area on December 23, 1984.



Mountain Bluebird
Photo by T. H. Kent

Lesser Black-backed Gull at Red Rock Reservoir

21

Thomas H. Kent
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, IA 52240

John Bowles
Central College
Pella, IA 50219

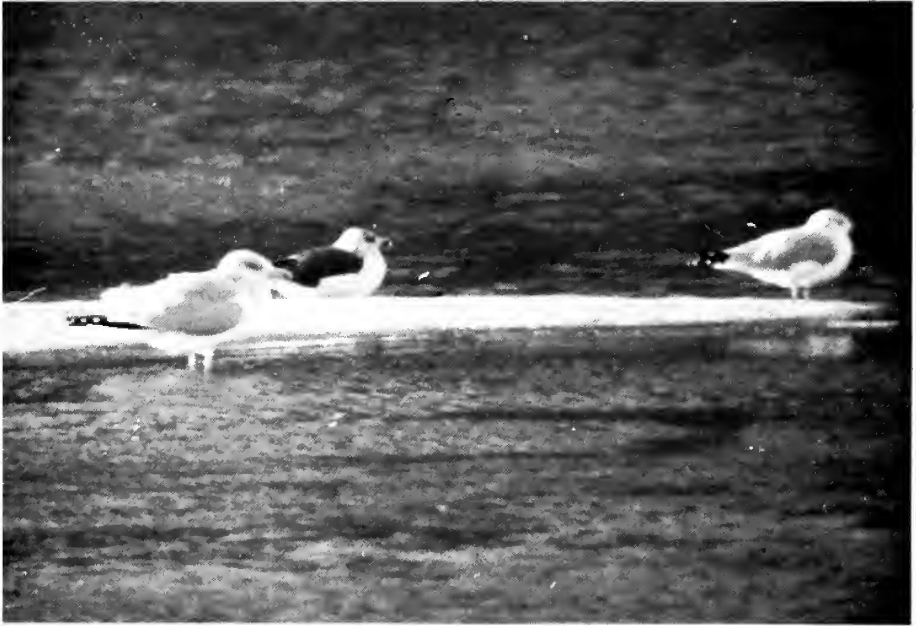
At 8:15 a.m. on 1 December 1984 the junior author and David R. White were viewing an estimated 1,000 gulls in the north tailwater area at Red Rock Dam, Marion County, when a black-backed gull was discovered. Most of the gulls (90% Ring-bills, 10% Herring, 1 Bonaparte's) were circling below the dam or roosting on sand bars created by low water. The black-backed gull was seen on a small bar opposite the inlet and stood apart from the other gulls. Initially the bird appeared to be the size of a Herring Gull but later comparisons and photographs indicated that it was definitely smaller than Herring Gulls but larger than Ring-bills.

Bowles returned the next afternoon with Darwin Koenig and found the bird in the same spot. A positive identification of Lesser Black-backed Gull was made based on yellow leg color. Many observers saw the bird over the next three days on the same bar or further down river. The last sighting was on 5 December.

The following description, which is characteristic of an adult winter or fourth winter Lesser Black-backed Gull, is a composite of several documentations and photographs. The bird was easily spotted because of its very dark mantle. It was larger than all Ring-bills and smaller than all Herring Gulls that ventured near it, although it was closer to the size of a Herring Gull. The feathering was all white except for the dark back and upper wing surface, black primaries, and light gray streaking on the neck. The bill was as long or longer than that of a Herring Gull but narrower; it was light yellow with a subterminal red mark on the lower mandible. The eye and legs were yellow. The upper surface of the primaries was black with a single white mirror on the first primary. The back and inner portion of the upper wing were a dark charcoal gray. There was a prominent white trailing edge to the flight feathers that became narrower and scalloped along the outer primaries. When the bird was standing, the wings projected beyond the tail.

The size and/or leg color distinguish the Lesser Black-backed Gull from all other dark mantled gulls that have been reported from North America. The Great Black-backed Gull, an East Coast species that has been seen in Iowa, is distinctly larger than a Herring Gull with a massive bill, pink legs, and a mantle that is as dark as the wing tips. The Slaty-backed Gull, a Siberian species seen near St. Louis in January 1983 for the first record in the lower 48 states, is also larger than a Herring Gull and has pink legs and more white in the wing tip than a Lesser Black-backed Gull. The Western Gull, an inhabitant of the Pacific Coast, is the size of a Herring Gull with pink legs and a massive bill. The Yellow-footed Gull, a bird of the Gulf of California recently separated from the Western Gull, is slightly larger than a Herring Gull with larger bill, but otherwise has plumage quite similar to the Lesser Black-backed Gull. The Yellow-footed Gull is not a known vagrant to the east. The California Gull, which could occur in Iowa, is the size of a Lesser Black-backed Gull and has a mantle darker than that of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. However, the mantle is obviously lighter than any of the dark-mantled gulls and the legs are greenish.

The Lesser Black-backed Gull is a European gull that winters in Africa but strays regularly in small numbers to the East Coast of North America and has extended its range in recent years to the Great Lakes and Gulf Coast. It was first found at Cleveland in 1977 and has been observed yearly since then on Lake Erie. There also are records from Michigan (4), Indiana (4), and Illinois (7), including two on the Mississippi River north of St. Louis (also in Missouri). There is a



Herring, Lesser Black-backed and Ring-billed Gulls, Red Rock Reservoir, 3 December 1984. T.H. Kent photo

Wisconsin record from Milwaukee in 1980. A Minnesota/Wisconsin bird at Duluth/Superior from 19 October to 4 November 1984 arrived with a storm from the east (Eckert 1984). It is possible that this same individual migrated south with Herring and Ring-billed Gulls to Iowa. To the south, there is an early Texas record from 1952 and several along the Gulf Coast since 1969. One individual returned to the Texas coast for several years and a one-footed bird was seen on the Florida/Alabama coast over a seven year period. Other unusual locations include Denver in December 1976 (Webb and Conry 1978), Monterey County, California in January 1978 (Binford 1978), and Oklahoma City in February 1984.

Lesser Black-backed Gulls appear in winter or as migrants, usually at the time of freeze up. Most records have been from October through March with the earliest in Alabama on 17 September and the latest at Chicago on 27 April. There are, however, three summer records from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Northwest Territories.

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Field Reports - Winter 1984

23

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WEATHER AND HABITAT (Contributed by Jim Sandrock)

December 1984 was notable for its wetness and warmth. Precipitation totaled nearly twice the normal to rank this December as the 11th wettest in the 112-year-long state records, and the month closed out the wettest three-year period in the history of Iowa. Snow averaged near normal in quantity, but melted rapidly after each fall so that snow cover was relatively small (in most areas). The rapid melt pattern was typified by 28 December when temperatures in the 60s were recorded (except for the northern two tiers of counties). Many localities set record highs for that date (Ankeny, Knoxville, and Oskaloosa reported 70° F., while a 95-year record was topped at Des Moines). A typical winter day in Iowa occurred on 6 December when northwest Iowa experienced its warmest day, while it was -2° F. in Keokuk in the southeast.

Cold, windy, dry January 1985 reversed the mild, wet weather of the last quarter of 1984. The coldness was most pronounced over eastern Iowa, the dryness in western Iowa, and the windiness in the northern areas of the state where winds exceeded the normal by 30%. January temperatures varied from near normal in the northwest to some 5° below normal in the southeast. Mild days were reported from 4-7 January (34° F. at Waukon, 51° F. at Sidney), while cold temperatures and wind chill factors on 19-20 January swept across the state (-15° F. at Shenandoah, -27° F. at Dubuque); wind chill factors ranged from -65° F. in the southwest to -85° F. in the northeast during that period. The windiness caused much blowing and drifting snow while January precipitation was somewhat above the normal with the greatest amounts of snowfall reported in southeast Iowa at Keosauqua and Donnellson.

The traditional "January thaw" occurred in February 1985 and provided welcome relief from the long period of consecutive days with temperatures below freezing. Although western and northern Iowa continued to receive some snowfall, February was in general a rainier, warmer month than normal. Some parts of the state experienced thunderstorms and warm temperatures which effectively removed any remaining snow cover. The gradual and persistent warming trend allowed ice-filled rivers and streams to melt slowly, so that the flooding and damaging run-off experienced in the preceding two years were generally not present in 1985.

HABITAT

A few things to consider: The relatively little snow cover — both in depth and time — provided open spaces and feeding opportunities for many birds. (We, for example, had fewer birds at our feeders this winter — both in species and numbers). The mild February (and early March) should be conducive for early breeders. The relatively mild winter (when compared to the previous two) should help game bird population, etc.

GENERAL TRENDS

For the most part, the winter of 1984-85 was uneventful in terms of population trends and movements. The temperature was somewhat above normal, although this did not result in significantly higher numbers of wintering birds. While a few individuals of certain duck species overwintered when in normal winters they would be absent, overall numbers of species which normally winter were down, as a result of the continuing downtrend in numbers of prairie-breeding ducks. Mallard numbers especially should have been much higher than they were for this type of relatively open winter. The lack of snow cover might have been expected to increase the raptor numbers, but this also did not come about, possibly due to the lack of snow north and west of Iowa, allowing all raptors to winter a little further north than usual. Extremely late record dates were set by three shorebird species:

Greater Yellowlegs, Dunlin, and American Woodcock. Most other species groups appeared in normal numbers, except for certain incursive species.

Influxes of such incursive species, while not directly related to our winter weather in Iowa, were noted this year for Bohemian Waxwing, Red and White-winged Crossbills, Pine Siskin, and Pine Grosbeak. Thus cemeteries were well-birded, especially Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines. On the other hand, species such as Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, and Evening Grosbeak were present in low numbers.

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

The most exciting phenomenon for birders this winter was the appearance of individuals of certain species which were previously unrecorded or very rare in Iowa. First state records (pending Records Committee approval) were made for Bean Goose and Lesser Black-backed Gull, with other rarities (also pending Records Committee approval) for the winter season including Cattle Egret, Mute Swan, Trumpeter Swan, Oldsquaw, Ferruginous Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Prairie Falcon, Merlin, Greater Yellowlegs, Dunlin, American Woodcock, Common Barn-Owl, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Varied Thrush, Gray Catbird, Bohemian Waxwing, Solitary Vireo, Common Yellowthroat, Great-tailed Grackle, Oriole sp., and Pine Grosbeak. Details of these sightings are included below.

SPECIES DATA (★ = documented)

Pied-billed Grebe: The latest date was 31 Dec at Snyder's Bend, Plymouth County (BLN).

Horned Grebe: Two birds at Saylorville Reservoir 2 Dec (SD) provided the second latest record for Iowa.

White Pelican: One apparently attempted to winter on the Iowa River at Iowa City, being present 6 Jan-1 Feb. It showed "no indication of injury" (RHo). This was the second January record for Iowa. Another late bird was at Ames 11 Dec (PMa).

Tundra Swan: At their usual location but rather late were 30 at Lock and Dam 9 22 Dec (DKo). Nine were identified by calls near Princeton 17 Dec (★BHu, B&ABB). Two swans identified as Tundras but without details were at Ottumwa 7 Dec.

Trumpeter Swan: According to an article by Larry Stone in the *Des Moines Register*, the 9-10 Trumpeter Swans which appeared at Otter Creek Marsh in Tama County (★TK) in late Dec for about 2 weeks came from a captive flock in Hennepin County, Minnesota. This is the first year in about 18 years that any of these birds have left during the winter months. Another group of 19 also left in late Dec. Some of these birds had yellow neck bands. Birds which appeared in Missouri and Kansas later in the winter also had yellow neck bands, and some may have been the same birds which appeared in Iowa. Any swan seen in Iowa (except perhaps those which migrate across Lock and Dam 9 in northeast Iowa) should be very carefully identified, as the possibility exists that wild Trumpeters from the Valentine, Nebraska or Lacreek, South Dakota areas may migrate into Iowa in late fall. The carrying capacity of wintering areas in northern states is at the point of being exceeded, forcing these birds to migrate for the first time in many years. Note that the adult Trumpeter Swan pictured in the *Master Guide to Birding* is in fact a Tundra Swan without the yellow bill spot (Birding 16:170).

Snow Goose: The last ones in western Iowa were at Snyder's Bend 29 Dec (BGL), with returning birds appearing at Willow Slough, Mills County, 28 Feb (BLW). Eastern birds were 24 late at Saylorville 2 Dec (SD) and 34 returnees in Lee County 28 Feb (RCe).

Ross' Goose: Five were reported at Shanandoah on the CBC 28 Dec, with two documented (★RS).

- Canada Goose:** Scattered small groups wintered statewide as usual. Large late fall concentrations were 1,000 at Rathbun 6 Dec (TJo), and 500 near Cherokee 31 Dec "migrating southwest" (MB). As late as 1 Jan 140 were at Saylorville (SD, GBr).
- Bean Goose:** A bird of this species discovered on the DeSoto NWR CBC 29 Dec (★RW, ★AG) was generally thought to be a wild bird, and was seen by many hundreds of observers from throughout the United States. The last reported sighting was 6 Jan (m.ob.). This bird was of one of the eastern races, examples of which are rarely if ever kept in collections, and no other signs of captivity could be discerned.
- Wood Duck:** A few birds attempted to overwinter: "at least 2 males" wintered at Rock Valley in northwest Iowa (JVD); 2 were at DeSoto NWR 3 Jan (TB, B&LP, BJR); and one was at Cedar Rapids 9 Feb (JFu).
- American Black Duck:** Wintering birds (not unusual for this species) included 2-4 at the Quad Cities (PCP). Unexpected "inland" was one at Montezuma 7 Jan (DKo). High count was the 15 at Saylorville in late Dec (SD, GBr, EMu).
- Mallard:** The usual wintering concentrations were found in favored locations, although numbers were significantly lower: at Bay's Branch, Guthrie County, the 3,968 reported 20 Dec were considered "a low number in a mild winter; indicates population down 50% from previous years" (RLC). Highest number reported was the 25,000 9 Dec at Rathbun (SD, JJD, GBr).
- Northern Pintail:** Most wintering Mallard flocks contain at least one Pintail and one Am. Black Duck if looked for hard enough. One wintered with the Mallards at Rock Valley (JVD).
- Gadwall:** Normally unlikely to winter, 4 at Montezuma 7 Jan were unexpected (DKo).
- American Wigeon:** As with Gadwall, not expected in midwinter; however one was at Montezuma 7 Jan (DKo).
- Canvasback:** As expected, there were a few late Dec (BFH) and late Feb (RCe) sightings. None overwintered.
- Redhead:** Recorded 29 Dec (BFH) and 28 Feb (BLW), with no wintering birds reported.
- Ring-necked Duck:** This species will overwinter if conditions allow, and so birds on the Mississippi in southeast Iowa 3 Jan and 5 Feb (12) were not unexpected (RCe).
- Lesser Scaup:** One at DeSoto NWR was late 3 Jan (TB, B&LP, BJR), although this species also will overwinter if possible. Early returning birds (6) were found 20 Feb at Iowa City (JFu).
- Greater Scaup:** Three were at Riverton 28 Dec on the Shenandoah CBC (★RS).
- Oldsquaw:** There were two reports: one 15 Dec on the Rathbun CBC (★BHe), and another 20 Dec on the Mississippi at Keokuk (RCe). Regular checks of the Keokuk pool in late fall and winter may reveal interesting waterfowl and gulls.
- Common Goldeneye:** The expected wintering birds were found on the Mississippi, with 100+ at Keokuk (RCe).
- Bufflehead:** As usual, not found wintering. Latest was one 1 Jan (SD, EMu), with returning birds 28 Feb (RCe).
- White-winged Scoter:** Only report was the three seen 29 Dec on the Clinton CBC (LB1, CB1, BB1, fide PCP).
- Hooded Merganser:** Normally found late in fall, one was at Saylorville 30 Dec (SD, EMu, GBr).
- Common Merganser:** As usual, some wintered on the Mississippi in southeast Iowa (RCe).
- Red-breasted Merganser:** Uncommon in Iowa, the 2-5 at Saylorville 16-23 Dec were the only ones reported (SD).

Ruddy Duck: The last ones seen were the 7 at Keokuk 20 Dec (RCe).

Turkey Vulture: The last record was one in Decatur County 12 Dec (DGi). There are 5 CBC records and one winter record for Iowa.

Osprey: One was late at Big Sand Mound, Louisa County, 1 Dec (PCP). This is Iowa's latest fall date except for 5 CBC records and 2 winter records.

Bald Eagle: Normal wintering numbers were found statewide, as reflected by concentrations of 22 at Riverton in southwest Iowa 8 Jan (BLW), 11 at Saylorville 11 Dec (SD), 118 "in view at one time" at Keokuk (RCe), and 67 at Lock and Dam 13 on the Mississippi (PCP).

Northern Harrier: As expected, a few birds wintered in southcentral Iowa, but no late Jan or early Feb reports were received from elsewhere in the state.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: The usual scattered wintering birds were reported, often from feeding stations.

Cooper's Hawk: Only two were reported (TJo), but a bird submitted as a possible Broad-winged Hawk appears almost certain to be a Cooper's also. CBC data over the last few years indicate that about twice as many Sharp-shins as Cooper's winter in Iowa.

Northern Goshawk: This species was widely reported throughout the period. The coincident paucity of Cooper's Hawk reports raises the possibility of misidentification of some Cooper's as Goshawks, especially immatures. Normally, the factors causing incursions of this species are the same factors which cause low breeding success, and so during incursions few immatures would be expected. Of 19 Goshawks reported (only about half documented), 9 were adults, 7 were unaged, and 3 were immatures. The latter were not conclusively described. In an incursion year, one would not expect 25 % immatures, and, as immatures would winter further south than adults, they would be expected primarily during migration periods if the adults are present in significant numbers in any given winter.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Scattered but encouraging reports of about 7 birds were received, as far north as Allamakee County (DKo) and west to Marshall County (B&MP).

Red-tailed Hawk: Few reports were received, in this rather normal year for this species.

Ferruginous Hawk: One near Tama 23 Dec was well-described (★TK).

Rough-legged Hawk: Scattered birds were seen throughout the period, but numbers were rather low, possible due to lack of snow cover to our north.

Golden Eagle: Up to 3 were at their normal location in northeast Iowa (DKo, JFu), and immatures were reported from Cherokee County (at least 2 different birds) (★MB, ★DBi) and Marshall County (★CKu).

American Kestrel: There were normal wintering numbers statewide, with numbers beginning to increase in late Feb (RCe).

Peregrine Falcon: This species is becoming more regular in Iowa, with 3 well-described birds reported: 2 Dec in Johnson County (★TS), 23 Jan near Davenport (★BB1), and 28 between Omaha and Council Bluffs (★BLW).

Prairie Falcon: The only sighting was the one seen 15 Dec on the Tristate CBC (BLW, RS, IG).

Merlin: Three were documented: 16 Dec at Waterloo on the CBC (★RKM), 28 Dec on the Shenandoah CBC (★RS), and 28 Feb at Ames (★SD). One other bird, a "nearly positive sighting" of an immature in the Booneville area, was reported.

Gray Partridge: Numbers were down significantly in northwest Iowa (MB, JVD), but birds on the southern edge of the range were the 12 at Davenport 30 Dec (Flo fide PCP), 2 at Tieg's Marsh, Story County, 25 Feb (CMM), and 9-12 wintering at Saylorville Marina (SD, EMu).

- Ring-necked Pheasant:** Only mention was of "few" in Cherokee County (MB).
- Wild Turkey:** This species is doing very well in many areas statewide, even in the northwest, where 100 seen 7 Dec in Sioux County were from a flock established across the river at Newton Hills State Park, South Dakota (JVD).
- Northern Bobwhite:** Few reports, but at least in southwest Iowa this species is at low levels.
- American Coot:** Usually does not overwinter, and so birds at Montezuma 7 Jan (DKo) and Cedar Rapids 9 Feb (TS, JFu) were unexpected.
- Killdeer:** Although this species may overwinter occasionally in southeast Iowa, midwinter reports from Ames 10 Jan (SD) and Fremont County 6 Jan (RS) were unusual.
- Greater Yellowlegs:** One seen 15 Dec on the Des Moines CBC was well-described (★BEn). This was by far the latest fall record for this species, which tends to be a late migrant.
- Dunlin:** Also by far the latest fall date for this species was set by the two birds at Coralville Reservoir 1 Dec (TK).
- Common Snipe:** The usual reports of late Dec birds were received, but 1-2 overwintering in a ditch in Story County were unusual (SD), as was one which was seen until 10 Jan in Madison County (E&EA, DT).
- American Woodcock:** By far the latest fall record for Iowa was one shot 8 Dec in Story County (fide SD).
- Franklin's Gull:** Iowa's third latest record was made at Coralville Reservoir 1-2 Dec (TK, JFu).
- Bonaparte's Gull:** The latest were 2 on the Oakville CBC 21 Dec (★PCP).
- Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Iowa's first was at the tailwaters at Red Rocks Reservoir 1-5 Dec, where it was seen by many (JB, DKo, ★TK, ★FM). It was an adult in winter plumage, and was expected as this species has expanded its range greatly in eastern North America in recent years.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Peak fall numbers were the 3,000 at Red Rocks Reservoir 3 Dec (TK, TS), and the latest were seen 1 Jan at Rathbun (TJo) and Saylorville (SD). Returning birds were at Little Wall Lake 22 Feb (SD).
- Herring Gull:** As expected, the fall peak was later than for Ring-billed Gull, with 1,000 9 Jan at Keokuk (RCe). A few birds overwintered along the Mississippi as expected (RCe), PCP, but an immature at Iowa City 15 Jan was unexpected (TS). Numbers began increasing along the Mississippi in late Feb (RCe, PCP).
- Glaucous Gull:** Immatures are probably regular in winter along the Mississippi, and so 2 at Lock and Dam 19 in Lee County 13 Jan were not unexpected (★RCe, ★FM). However an adult at Keokuk 9-10 Jan (★RCe), was definitely unusual.
- Common Barn-owl:** The only report was of an unbanded adult in Madison County 4 Feb (EX&EA, DT). This species winters only rarely in Iowa, most such birds not surviving.
- Eastern Screech-owl:** Numbers for this species appeared to be up near Iowa City (RHo).
- Great Horned Owl:** Two reports of the pale northern race were received; one was photographed in Cherokee County 28 Jan (MB), and another "possible" was at Burlington 22 Dec and 25 Jan (RCe).
- Snowy Owl:** Few reports were received. At least 2 were in Pocahontas County Jan and Feb (RDW), while another was near Ames 17 Dec (fide SD). A third was far south at Lamoni 28 Jan (DGi).
- Burrowing Owl:** A belated report was received of one in Monona County 17 April, 1984 (Tom Sorensen fide JJD).
- Long-eared Owl:** The usual wintering birds were found, with the high count 5 at Big

- Creek State Park, Polk County 8 Dec (TK, TS, PCP).
- Short-eared Owl:** The usual wintering birds were reported for this species also, especially from southern Iowa. High count was the 8+ wintering at Tieg's Marsh (SD, m.ob.). One was outflanked by a Northern Harrier at 4:30 pm 7 Dec in Mills County (BLW).
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** The usual winter stake-outs were established, this year at Big Creek Park (m.ob.) and Grammer Grove, Marshall County (m.ob.). Another was at Ledges State Park 10 Feb (SD) and an apparently famished individual was eating a mouse at 2:45 pm 13 Jan at the Hooper Game Area, Warren County (JSi).
- Belted Kingfisher:** The usual wintering birds were reported statewide, but an incredible 55 were at Centerville Reservoir 8 Dec (TJo). (Unless this was a typo!)
- Red-headed Woodpecker:** Low numbers remained in Iowa this winter, it being virtually absent from the Missouri Valley (BLW, RS), and "scarce" in southern Iowa (TJo, RLC).
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** A few wintering birds were found, including one at a Marshall County feeder through 9 Feb (CMM).
- Common Flicker:** "Unusually large numbers" wintered in Sioux County (JVD), and it was "seen commonly" in southcentral Iowa (JSi).
- Pileated Woodpecker:** One was at its "usual location" at the eastern edge of its range below the Saylorville Dam 27 Jan (BEn).
- Horned Lark:** This species was probably present in normal numbers (SD), but was often hard to find (JVD) due to absence of snow cover.
- Blue Jay:** Reportedly this species was scarce, at least at Madison County feeders (E&EA).
- American Crow:** "Thousands" were seen all winter at Saylorville, feeding on shad (BEn). Other large groups were 160 in Mills County 16 Dec (BLW), and 130-135 at a roost at Sioux Center in Dec and Jan (JVD).
- Tufted Titmouse:** The "first heard or seen in more than a year" was at Ames 28 Jan (PMA).
- Red-breasted Nuthatch:** A few wintered in Iowa, most noticeably at the well-covered Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines, where 2-4 were seen (m.ob.). Just an average to poor year for this species.
- White-breasted Nuthatch:** In Mills County careful regular censuses showed that this year there were only about half as many as in previous years (BLW). Is there some movement of these birds in certain winters?
- Brown Creeper:** Most interesting amongst the usual reports of wintering birds statewide was the flock of 6 at Oak Grove Park, Sioux County (JVD).
- Carolina Wren:** A cooperative bird was at the Baade feeder in Des Moines throughout, where it was seen by almost everyone (RMB). Two others were reported: one seen periodically at the Madison County Conservation Headquarters (E&EA, DT), and another at a Burlington feeder during Feb (CFu, JaF).
- Winter Wren:** A late bird was at Ames 1 Jan (SD)
- Golden-crowned Kinglet:** A few wintered in Iowa, except for the northwest (JVD), with as many as 8 at Ames (SD, EMu).
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** There were three reports in December: 5 on the Davenport CBC 16 Dec (CB1 fide PCP), and one each at Burlington 22 Dec (CFu, JaF) and on the Muscatine CBC 23 Dec (LB1, BB1, CB1 fide PCP).
- Eastern Bluebird:** High count among the usual reports of wintering birds was the 18 at Honey Creek State Park near Rathbun 18 Dec (TJo).
- Mountain Bluebird:** A winter highlight was the male which wintered north of Lamoni in Decatur County. It was discovered during the Lamoni CBC

(★JRL) and subsequently seen by everyone through at least 2 Feb. This was apparently Iowa's fourth confirmed record.

Townsend's Solitaire: Only one report was received of this rare but regular wintering bird in Iowa. Two were seen 18-24 Feb in southwest O'Brien and northwest Cherokee Counties (★MB, ★JFu).

Hermit Thrush: One was probably wintering at Brown's Lake, Woodbury County 11 Feb (KD).

American Robin: The usual wintering birds were reported, but the high count was only 36, those in Cherokee County in Jan (MB).

Varied Thrush: Three apparently wintered in Iowa this year. One was at Big Spirit Lake during the CBC period (DHa), where it fed with House Sparrows. Another was photographed in Davenport where it visited a feeder from 9 Jan on (★PCP), and a third was at Titonka, Kossuth County, 5-8 Dec (★CK1). This species is now found every winter in Iowa.

Gray Catbird: Very late birds were at Waterloo 30 Dec (FM) and DeSoto NWR 9 Jan (E&EA, DT). There is only one other Iowa record after the CBC period.

Brown Thrasher: A late bird was at Sioux City 15 Dec (SJM). A few birds of this species winter most years in southeast Iowa.

Bohemian Waxwing: This species does not appear every year in Iowa, and so the several reports had birders visiting cemeteries, especially Glendale in Des Moines, where up to 3 were seen 27 Jan-24 Feb (HZ, m.ob.). In West Des Moines 5-8 were found 24 Feb (SD), and others were found at Saylorville 24 Feb (SD), Amana 4-15 Feb (CJB), 16-21 Feb at Cherokee (DBi), 13 Jan at Rathbun (TJo), 15-20 Jan at Lamoni (★RLC, TJo), and in Dallas County 24 Dec (★RLC).

Cedar Waxwing: Several large flocks were reported, including 550 at West Des Moines 24 Feb (SD). Numbers were up this year in Iowa.

Northern Shrike: The usual scattered wintering birds were reported.

Loggerhead Shrike: Numbers appeared to be down this winter. At Lamoni DGi stated that he had seen the "fewest shrikes in 25 years". Documentation of these two species is not very good, especially in the area of overlap in central Iowa. Any Loggerheads in the north and Northern in the south must be described. Only one shrike sp. was reported (PhH, B&MP).

Solitary Vireo: The first December record for Iowa was of one seen 20 Dec on the Lost Nation CBC (★BB1). The description awaits acceptance by the Records Committee, but seems reasonable. This species tends to be a late migrant.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: As there are very few wintering attempts recorded for Iowa, two such this year were of interest: one was at a Marshalltown feeder until 19-20 Jan, when wind chills of 70-80 below probably caused its demise (ES), and another was near Lamoni 5 Jan (TB, RS).

Common Yellowthroat: Iowa's previous late date of 3 Nov was shattered by a bird seen 20 Dec at Keokuk (★RCe). In recent years this species has been found on CBCs in northwest Missouri.

Rufous-sided Towhee: Two wintering birds were reported. One of the spotted race was at a Mills County feeder 4-13 Feb (BLW), and a male (race not noted) was at a feeder in Warren County all winter (JSi).

Fox Sparrow: This species winters occasionally in southeast Iowa, but "up to 7" wintering at Ames were unusual (SD, GBr, EMu).

Swamp Sparrow: This species normally winters in small numbers in southeast Iowa also, but one in Guthrie County 20 Jan (RLC) was unusual.

White-throated Sparrow: The expected scattered wintering birds were found in the southeast third of the state.

White-crowned Sparrow: Numbers appeared normal for this species, which winters throughout, but primarily in the south.

- Harris' Sparrow:** A few birds wintered at the east edge of their range, such as Marshall County 16 Jan (PhH, B&MP). Reproductive success may not have been great, at least in one southwest Iowa population, as study birds were present in higher proportions (BLW).
- Dark-eyed Junco:** One with white wingbars was in Mills County in Feb (BLW).
- Lapland Longspur:** The high counts reported were rather low: 200+ in both Hardin and Marshall Counties 18 Jan (PhH, CMM).
- Snow Bunting:** High count was 420 in Bremer County 15 Dec on the Waterloo CBC (FM), but other reports were of much smaller groups, all from the northern two-thirds of the state.
- Red-winged Blackbird:** Large numbers remained later than usual in southwest Iowa (RS), but wintering numbers appeared normal.
- Rusty Blackbird:** Small flocks returned early 9 Feb at Oak Grove Park in Sioux County (JVD) and at Tieg's Marsh 15 Feb (SD).
- Brewer's Blackbird:** A few individuals winter in Iowa each year, but only one was reported, that on 25 Jan at Coralville (JFu). Details should be provided with reports of this species, which is much easier to identify when in mixed-sex flocks.
- Great-Tailed Grackle:** Following two summers of reports from the southwestern third of Iowa, the first late fall record was made by a male seen near Glenwood on the Omaha CBC 22 Dec (*B&LP, *RS). This bird was with several thousand Common Grackles leaving a roost. For several years Great-tailed Grackles have been found on the Squaw Creek NWR CBC in northwest Missouri.
- Common Grackle:** A few reports statewide of wintering birds included 5 at Cherokee (MB).
- Oriole Sp.:** A report was received of a female Northern Oriole which "came and ate grape jelly all day" 26 Nov-2 Feb at Atlantic (SSt). No description of the bird was received, but its food preference supports its identification as an oriole. In recent years several "Northern" Orioles have visited feeders in the winter months, and there was one report of a "Bullock's" Oriole in 1981.
- Pine Grosbeak:** A winter highlight was the appearance of possibly 3 different birds at Glendale Cemetery 6-25 Feb (*B&MP, E&EA, m.ob.). Two were photographed at the Aurelia Cemetery in Cherokee County 25 Dec (TJo), although no pictures were submitted.
- Purple Finch:** There was only one report of high numbers in this year of generally low numbers. There were 200-400 in cedars 16 Feb in Fayette (RKM). Most other observers noted the general lack of these birds this year.
- Red Crossbill:** This was a good crossbill year, with many reports throughout the period, of up to 30 birds (RKM). Almost any cemetery if checked regularly would yield some Red Crossbills this winter.
- White-winged Crossbill:** While not as common as Reds, this species was often found with them. Most reports were from Glendale Cemetery, where a high of 6 was seen 18 Feb (RLC). Other localities were Linn County where one was seen 14 Feb (CJB), and Hardin County, where 2 were at a feeder 12-16 Feb (B&MP).
- Common Redpoll:** A few were reported, primarily from northwest Iowa, but in low numbers. High count was the 8 at a feeder in Plymouth County 9 Jan (DS). The most southeastern report was at Ames 10 Feb (SD).
- Pine Siskin:** This species was common this winter, especially in cemeteries. High count was the 80+ in Logan Park Cemetery in Sioux City 9 Dec (BFH).
- American Goldfinch:** In contrast to Pine Siskin, Goldfinches were down significantly in numbers this winter, often being less numerous than Siskins (BFH). At Iowa City, there were only about one third as many as last year

(RHo).

Evening Grosbeak: Only two reports were received, of one at Orange City, Sioux County, 8 Dec (BBd fide JVD), and a pair in the Amana Woods 16 Feb (CJB).

Reporters: E&EA: Eugene and Eloise Armstrong; RMB: Renee M. Baade; CJB: Carl Bendorf; DBi: Dick Bierman; BB1: Brian Blevins; CB1: Corey Blevins; TB: Tanya Bray; MB: Marion Brewer; RCe: Robert Cecil; RLC: Raymond Cummins; KD: Kurt Dean; RDW: Rita DeWall; SD: Steve Dinsmore; BEn: Bery Engebretsen; JFu: Jim Fuller; DGi: Donald Gillaspey; AG: Alan Grenon; DHa: Doug Harr; BHe: Bill Heusinkveld; RHo: Rick Hollis; BHu: Betty Hunt; BFH: Bill Huser; TJo: Tom Johnson; TK: Tom Kent; CKl: Clara Klasse; DKo: Darwin Koenig; CKu: Carl Kurtz; BGL: Bob Livermore; JRL: Jeff Livingston; PMa: Paul Martsching; CMM: Carol McMillan; FM: Francis Moore; EMu: Erik Munsen; SJM: Steve Munzinger; RKM: Robert Myers; BLN: Bob Nickolson; B&LP: Babs and/or Loren Padelford; PCP: Peter Petersen; B&MP: Beth and/or Mark Proescholdt; ES: Ed Savage; RS: Ross Silcock; JSi: Jim Sinclair; SST: Sharon Steffens; DS: Dale Stone; TS: Tom Staudt; DT: Dennis Thompson; JVD: John Van Dyke; BLW: Barbara Wilson; RW: Rick Wright; HZ: Hank Zaletel.

OTHER OBSERVERS CITED: B&AB: Bill and Ann Barker; LBl: Lewis Blevins; JB: John Bowles; BBd: Beth Brand; GBt: Gordon Brown; JJD: Jim Dinsmore; CFu: Charles Fuller; JaF: Jane Fuller; IG: Ione Getscher; PhH: Phyllis Harris; FLo: Fred Lorenzen; BJR: B.J. Rose.

SPRING REPORTS: 1 Mar-30 May, due 1 June. Send to Tom Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA. 52240.

General Notes

Black Scoters on Mississippi River — Beginning in mid-October, I had been hearing reports on both the Chicago and Minnesota bird hotlines of large numbers of scoters, especially Black and Surf. In the late morning of 26 October 1984, these reports were in the back of my mind as I drove along the Mississippi River just north of Davenport. The river was covered with hundreds of decoys set out by hunters, but I had yet to see a live bird. About one mile north of LeClaire, I finally saw two birds diving and swimming. After getting them in my scope I noted the following details: Size was that of a nearby scaup, plumage was all black with the exception of a clearly demarcated solid gray area on the lower cheek which extended down the side of the neck. The bill was dark and relatively small and held level to the water. The forehead was rounded and steep. When one bird raised up to stretch its wings I saw the wings were all black and the belly was a gray brown color.

As I watched these two birds, four more swam in to join them. All six birds were identical. By this time I had concluded these were six Black Scoters. After checking the field guides later, I could not determine whether these were immature males or adult females.

Jim Fuller of Iowa City found all six birds in the same spot the next morning. As he was watching them a motorized duck blind came by, shots rang out, and only 4 birds took off and flew downstream. On Monday 29 October, Gerald White of Muscatine, saw just one bird about ½ mile downstream. If accepted this would represent the 11th documented record for Black Scoter in Iowa. Besides those listed in IOWA BIRDS (1984) there are the following recent records:

One female shot at Amana Lake in fall 1980 (IBL 53:98)

One female at Colfax on 11 November 1983 (IBL 53:98)

It is interesting to note that, with only one exception, all records of Black Scoter for which the sex was noted have been female birds (Dinsmore, et al. 1984). It seems to be difficult to distinguish females from immature males. Unless it is only adult female Black Scoters that wander to Iowa, some immature males are possible being misidentified as females.

Both Surf and White-winged Scoters were reported to the Iowa Birdline during the week following this sighting. As both Chicago and Minnesota birders were reporting larger than normal numbers of scoters at about this same time, it does seem we get some "overflow" birds in Iowa.

REFERENCES

Dinsmore, J. J., et al. 1984 *Iowa Birds*. Ames: Iowa State University Press., p. 88-89.

CARL J. BENDORF, 825 7th Ave., Iowa City, IA. 52240

Whimbrel in Story County — At approximately 12:30 p.m. on 12 May 1984, Gordon Brown, Mark Dixon, and I, all of Ames, saw a Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) at Hendrickson Marsh, Story County. The shorebird profile, large size, brown upperparts contrasting with whitish underparts, strongly marked head with dark eyeline, and decurved bill identified the bird as a Whimbrel. The bird was in the company of Willets (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) and numerous peeps, all feeding on a mudflat adjacent to a grassy field. Hendrickson Marsh was being drained, a fact which attributes to the extensive mudflats on which the Whimbrel was feeding. We viewed the bird until about 2:00 p.m. and left without flushing it. The bird was seen the next day (13 May) by Paul Martsching of Ames but not thereafter. This represents the second recent sighting of a Whimbrel at Hendrickson Marsh, the last being 4 May 1983 (I.B.L. 53:50). This record fits the general pattern of most recent Iowa records of Whimbrels being from mid-May (Dinsmore et al., *Iowa Birds*, Iowa State Univ. Press, 1984:142). Steve Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50010.

Red Knot at Hendrickson Marsh — At approximately 1:00 p.m. on 15 Sep 1984 I saw a Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) in the northwestern corner of Hendrickson Marsh, Story County. The bird was feeding with several Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) near the grassy edge of a shallow mudflat. The bird was a medium-sized, chunky shorebird with a slightly decurved bill and a dark stripe through the eye. The back feathers were gray with white edgings giving it a scaly appearance. The belly was white with some faint streaking on the upper part. The bird showed a faint white wing-stripe when flushed. The bird appeared similar to a Red Knot I saw a week earlier in Hampton, IL. The knot was present until sundown, being seen by Jim Dinsmore, Hank Zaletel, Mark Proescholdt, and Joe Schaufenbuel but was not present at sunrise the next morning.

Dinsmore, et al. (*Iowa Birds*, Iowa State Univ. Press, 1984:145) list two old records and three recent, unsubstantiated spring records. Besides this bird, other knots were reported this year near Red Rock Reservoir on 16 Jul 1984 (G. Black, *Des Moines Register*, 9 Sep 1984) and at Coralville Reservoir on 16 Sep 1984. My record and the Coralville bird closely match the 10 Sep 1937 of one seen at Anderson Lake, Hamilton County (Scott, *Auk* 55:275-276, 1938), suggesting that mid-September is the best time to see Red Knots in Iowa in fall. Steve Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50010.

Iowa Bird Cover for 1985

Our 1985 cover, an adult male Common Yellowthroat, is the work of Joseph Rigli of Fort Morgan, Colorado. He is an active bird watcher and freelance artist, ed.